

THE
Important Enquiry.

ADDRESSED TO

The Professors of every Denomination
of CHRISTIANS

IN

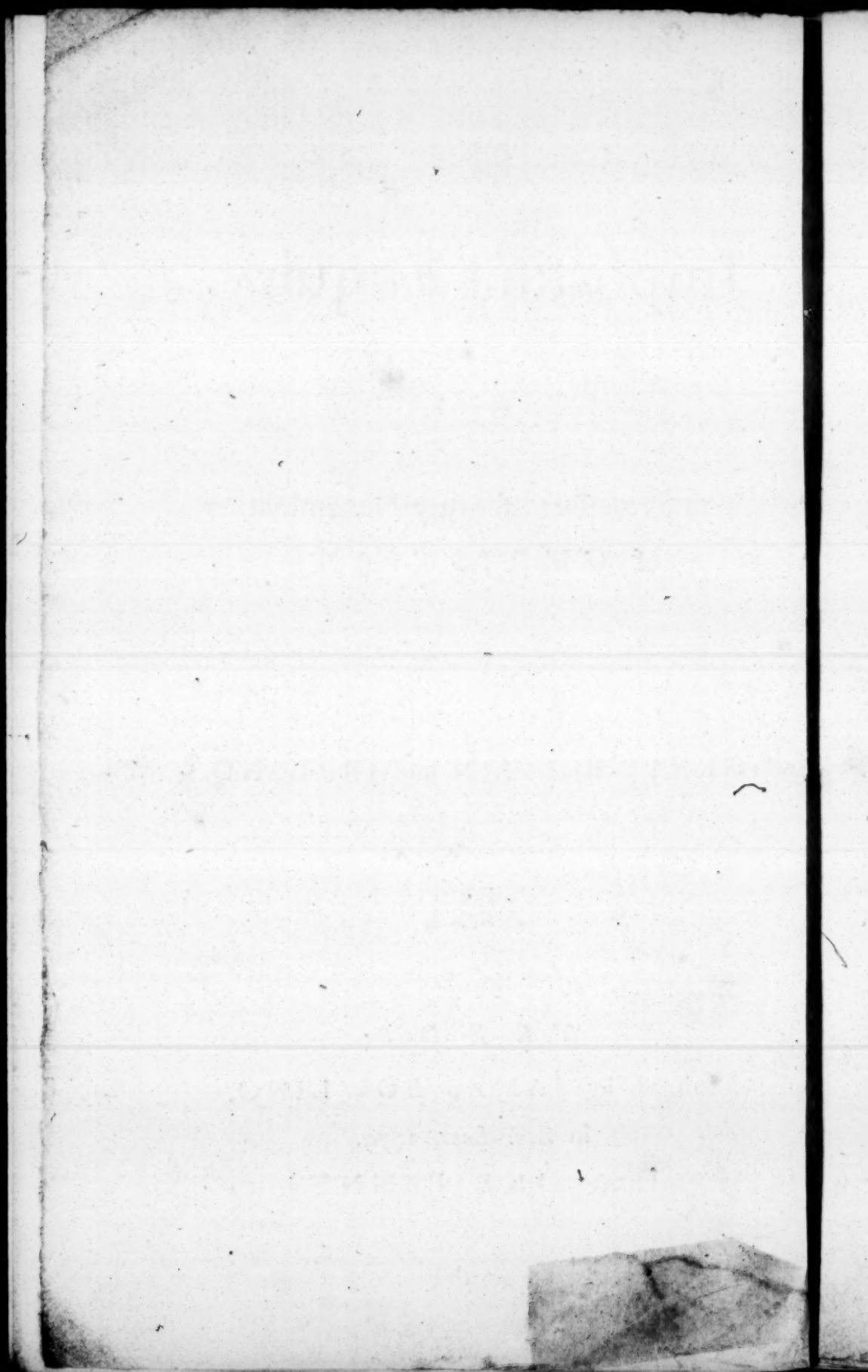
GREAT-BRITAIN and IRELAND.



L E E D S:

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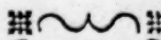
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MATTHEW v. 47.

What do ye more than others?

Quest.  HEREIN *should Christians be singular in their Obedience? Or, what may they and must they do more than others?*

Ans^w. TAKE the Answer in these Ten Rules, containing the Character of a Christian.

RULE I *Heartily love them that slight you, and wish and seek the good of those that hate you, and seek to hurt you. This is the very Thing urged in the Text, If you salute your Brethern only, and love them that love you, do not even the Publicans the same? Matth. v. 46, 47. To love them that respect and value us, this every one can do; but to love them truly that think meanly of us, and have Prejudices and hard Thoughts against us, and to speak well of them that speak evil of us: This is to do more than others. Thus the Martyr Cranmer, of whom it was a Proverb, Do the Bishop of Canterbury a Displeasure, and you shall ever have him your Friend. Thus that holy Man, in his parting Words, "I had never any greater Pleasure in all my Life than to forget and forgive Injuries, and to shew Kindness to them that sought evil to me." Study who have offended you, and disobliged you, and slighted you, and keep up good Thoughts of them,*

them, if the Cause will bear it, and speak nothing but Good of them, and think what Kindness you may shew them : Pray for them, wish well for them, *so shall you be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven.*

RULE II. *Swim against the Stream.* The Dead will swim with, but the Living against the Stream. When Religion is in Fashion, every one will be in it : But to bear Head against the Current of the Times, to be for strict Godliness in all your Ways, when the Stream runs quite against it, and to resolve as *David* did, *to be yet more vile*, this is to be and to do more than others. To be singular in your good Choice and Resolutions, with *Joshua*, though all should vote against you ; and, with *Noah*, to be perfect in your Generations, when never so adulterous ; and to walk with God, when all Flesh have corrupted their Way, this is to do more than others.

RULE III. *Take more Care of that which is most out of sight.* A Christian's Eye is most on the Things least seen : 1. *Upon his Heart* ; herein he doth exceed the Righteousness of the *Pharisees*, whose great care was to keep all fair and clean that came to view. Make great Conscience of your Carriage in Secret, and let your main Guard be upon your Hearts. 2. *Upon his Hope.* Others look to the Things seen ; Things in Hand : But the true Believer walks by Faith, not by Sight, and lives a quite different Life from any others in the World besides. As living upon the Hopes of Heaven doth differ from living on Pleasures, Profits, and Honours of the World.

RULE IV. *Be merciful to others Failings, and very severe to your own.* To aggravate our own
Evils

Evils, and to have an Excuse ready for our Brothers, to censure ourselves freely, and to come with a Mantle behind us to cover our Brother; this is to do more than others. The Servant of God rebukes others with Meekness, but falls out easily and bitterly with himself.

RULE V. *Suffer rather than Sin.* To go so far with *Christ* as our Way lies together, is to do no more than an unsound Professor may reach to: The Trial is when *Christ's* Interest and ours do cross; and we must either baulk our Duty, or our Safety and Advantage. The famous Martyr under *Julian*, would not give one Half-penny towards the building of the Idol's Temple, though he was offered his Life on those Terms. When a Man shall lie in outward Misery, and have a Door of Deliverance open, if he will but sin, and yet he will not accept it, this is to do more than others.

RULE VI. *Rejoice in Losses for Christ, and glory in the Cross.* When we take Pleasure in Infirmities, in Tribulations, and rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer Shame for the Name of *Christ*, this is to do more than others. When the Servants of God shall not only patiently but triumphantly undergo the Crosses that rack the Hearts of others; when *Paul* and *Silas* sing in the Stocks, and the Martyrs embrace the Faggots and kiss the Stake: When the valiant Pilot shall say of his Prison, *In the Judgment of the World we are in Hell, but I find in it the sweet Consolation of Heaven*; and the holy *Bradford*, *My Prison is sweeter to me than my Parlour, than any Pleasure I have had in all my Life.* This is to exceed others.

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RULE VII. *Make a true Conscience of the least Sin, but most Conscience of the greatest.* In one of these will the Unbeliever be found tardy. It may be he will fly from open Sins, and startle at gross staring Sins; but of little Sins he makes little Conscience; or else, he will be very tender of little Things, scruple the picking the Ears of Corn on the Sabbath-day, or the curing of the Sick, and strain at the Gnat, when he will in other Things swallow a Camel, devour Widows Houses. The Sincere will indulge no Sin; grieves for, groans under, cries out feelingly against his very Infirmities, but most dreads what God most hates.

RULE VIII. *Allow yourselves in the Neglect of no Duty, but reserve yourselves for the Duties of most Weight.* To tithe Mint and Cummin, and neglect Judgment, Mercy and Faith; to be zealous for human Ceremonies, Ordinances, and Mens Traditions, and omit the weightier Matters of the Law, is the *Pharisees* Way. To eye both the Tables, to join sweetly together Morality and Piety, to be punctual with Men, but not careless of God; to give to *Cæsar* the Things that are *Cæsar's*, but first to give to God the Things that be God's; this is to do more than others. The sincere Christian hath Respect to all God's Commandments, walks in all his Statutes; is throughout with God, but he is most zealous in those Things that lie next the Heart of Religion.

RULE IX. *To love your Reprovers.* Herein *David* doth more than *Ahab*: See their contrary Frames, 1 *Kings*. xxii. 8. *Psal.* cxli. 5.

RULE X. *Subject all your worldly interest to your Maker's Glory, and perform holy Duties with holy Ends;*

Ends ; while other do their best Actions with carnal Aims, you must do your common Actions with heavenly Aims.

Q. How may we know when we do more than others that are unsound ?

I SHALL answer this Question by propounding eight Questions to you, beseeching you to retire to the most solemn and strict Examination, and make conscience to give a clear Answer to these few Interrogatories.

Q. 1 When others pick and chuse, have you Respect to all GOD's Commandments ? The sound Christian sets all GOD's Commands before him : He eyes all his Copy, and heartily studies a throughout Conformity : He doth not fear the LORD and serve other Gods, nor divides his Service between God and Mammon ; but he is all for Uniformity, and entirely devoted to GOD's Service and Fear alone : He hath a good Conscience, willing in all Things to live honestly, and doth forsake all his Sins, and keep all his Statutes, that are known to him.

LET me therefore ask you two Questions :

(1.) *WHEN others divide the Tables, do you join them in your Practice ?* The Hypocrite may be just and square towards Men, but follow him to his Family or Closet you shall find but little of GOD : His Family is neglected, his Soul is neglected : Or it may be he is a forward first table Man, but you shall find him tardy in the second. He will make many Prayers, and long Prayers, yet no Conscience of devouring Widows Houses.

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He is a great Pretender to Piety, but mean while neglects Judgment and Mercy. The Sincere join all together : He is so far careful for Justice with Men, that mean while he will not neglect the first and great Part of Justice, to give God his Due. He doth justly, he loves Mercy, but withal walks humbly with God : He walketh soberly with Respect to himself, righteously towards his Neighbour, and godly towards his Maker. He is not one of these that are good only on his Knees, but you shall find him every where conscientious : You shall have Temperance at his Table, Chastity and Modesty in his Behaviour, Grace and Truth in his Works, Charity in his Deeds, Faithfulness in his Trust, Justice in his Dealings. He doth not only seem to be religious, but bridleth his Tongue ; he is not only a good Christian, but a good Neighbour ; not only a good Man, but a good Husband, a good Master, a dutiful Child, a diligent and faithful Servant, a good Subject. In a Word, he make a great Conscience of discharging the Duties of his Relations among Men.

(2.) *When others stick in Externals, do you look to the spiritual Part of every Command, and principally mind the inward Vitals of Religion ?* Do you not only make Conscience of performing Duties, but carefully look to the Manner of performing them, and the Ends for which you perform them ? Do you not only make Conscience of open, but of secret Sins ? Do you abound above all in secret Duties ? Do you keep a Watch upon your Hearts, and make Conscience not only of the gross Acts of Sin, but even of sinful Thoughts, Inclinations and Desires ?

Q. II. *WHEN others have had their Reserves in closing with Christ, do you give up all to Him entirely ?*

ly? Have you taken *Christ* deliberately, understandingly, sitting down first, and counting the Cost? Have you not secret Reserves for your own Ease, Safety, Estate, beloved Sin? Have you, upon solemn Consideration, accepted *Christ* as the LORD your Righteousness, for better, for worse, for all Changes of Times and Conditions? To run all Hazards with Him, and to take your Lot with Him, fall as it will?

Q. III. WHEN others are for a little Religion by the by, do you make Religion your Business? Do you not put off GOD with the World's Leavings, and serve Him when you are at Leisure? Must not GOD stand by while the World is first served? And are not your Souls the least of your Cares, and put off with some Scraps of your Time? Is Religion your Trade, and your Conversation in Heaven? Do you walk with GOD, or have you only now and then a Turn with Him? When you have ended your Prayers, is there an End of your Religion till you come to them again, or do you carry on a Design of Religion throughout your whole Course? Have you only a List of Religion at the Outside of the Piece, or is the Woof of Religion woven into the whole Cloth? into Heart and Life? into your Discourse, and Trades, and Tables? Do you first seek the Kingdom of GOD, and the Righteousness thereof? Is it the chief Care of your Lives that GOD be served, and your Souls be saved? And is this the one Thing necessary with you, that you are most solicitous about? Do your very Hearts say, with *David*, *One Thing have I desired of the LORD, and that I will seek after?*

Q. IV. WHEN others are for the Wages of Religion are you for the Work? Can you say, with *David*,

David, I have chosen thy Precepts? Had you rather be holy than otherwise, if you were at your Choice? Had you rather be God's Servant, and live at his Command, than at your own Lusts? Do you count the Laws of *Christ* your Heritage, or rather do you not count them your Bondage? Do you chuse not only the Wages of Righteousness, but the Ways of Righteousness? Are God's Commandments your Delight? And are the sweetest Hours of your Lives the Hours you spend with Him? Do you never enjoy yourselves so much as when you most enjoy God? Is his Service the greatest Comfort? And is it Meat and Drink to you to do his Will, unless when you are not yourselves, in the Time of Temptations or Oppression? Do you make use of holy Duties only as Men do of Physick, when they are ill at Ease, when Conscience lasheth, or Afflictions sting, or to pacify God, that he may not hurt you? Or, do you use them as your daily Bread, and Staff of your Life, and Means of your Comforts?

Q. V. WHEN *others are for a cheap and easy Religion, are you for Self-denial?* When others are for the Religion that will serve them best, are you for that which will serve God best? When others are all upon the sparing Hand, and will spare what may be spared, and study how they may best save Charges in going to Heaven, are you of princely Spirits, to resolve not to serve the LORD with that which will cost you nothing? Is your Course of Religion such as doth put your Flesh to it, and cross and curb its Desires, or do you love to give it what it craves, and suffer it to take its own Way? Have you no Enemy you dread so much as Self? Do you pamper and please it, and make Provision for it, or do you pray.

pray and watch against it; and grieve for its Infirmities, and had rather than all the World that this Enemy were under your Feet?

Q. VI. *WHEN others are for no more of Religion than needs must, are you for the Height of Religion?* Some are very inquisitive what is the lowest pitch of Religion that a Man may have, and go to Heaven: But the sincere Christian, though satisfied that his State is safe, will rest in no Attainments in Grace, but reaches forward, and presses on, if it were possible, to attain to the Resurrection of the Dead. *He that doth not desire, and design, and endeavour Perfection, never yet came up to Sincerity.* A true Believer desires Holiness for Holiness Sake, and therefore is set upon perfecting Holiness. Others desire it only for Heaven's Sake, and therefore are only for so much as will bear their Charges thither. Others make use of Holiness only as a Bridge to Heaven, and therefore are for no more than will just serve their Turn. The true Believer hath a holy Nature, and therefore Holiness is his Element and natural Employment; and he must needs desire Holiness in its Height, because every Nature reaches after Perfection in its Kind. He desires not Holiness because it is the Way to Heaven, but he loves Heaven the better for the holy way that leads to it, and for the perfect Holiness which is there.

Q. VII. *WHEN others are all for the Salvation of Christ, are you as truly for Sanctification by Christ?* Do you take *Christ* as God offers Him, with all his Offices and Benefits, to be both a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance as well as Remission of Sins? Are you desirous of the Dominion of *Christ*, as well as Deliverance by *Christ*?

Christ? Do you close with his Burden, as well as his Benefits? Do you count his Laws your Liberty, his Government not your Bondage, but your Privilege, his Service your Freedom? Do you go in *Christ's* Ways, as in Givens or Fetters, or do you run with Enlargement of Heart?

Q. VIII. WHEN *others make Self their End*, do you set up GOD above all as your highest End? Is it your great Design in your whole Course of Life to glorify and enjoy GOD? Do you count this your whole Business and Blessedness? Do you make other Business stoop to this? other Interest yield to this? Do your souls breathe after this above all worldly Good, that *Christ* may be magnified in you? Do you count your Name, and your Estate, as Loss, and the Delights of Sense but as Puddle-Water, in Comparison of *Christ*?

IF Conscience give a comfortable and clear Answer to these Questions, go in Peace: Blessed are you of the LORD: GOD is your Friend: Heaven is your Portion: *Christ* is yours: All is yours. *For he that hath these Things shall never be moved.*

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